

**ABSTRACT**

**Dementia is a progressive brain dysfunction that leads to disintegration of ability to look after oneself and the need for community resources to minimise the resulting impact of the progressive disability. The various care services available in Singapore for elderly patients and their caregivers are: hospital based, community centre-based, community home-based, and nursing home based. New services for dementia care are: senior care centres (SCC), integrated community mental health and dementia support networks, and Community Intervention Teams (COMIT). The Mobile Eldercare Locator (MEL) enables users to search for health and social care services in Singapore based on specified eldercare needs of the individuals. Referral to community centre-based services such as day rehabilitation and dementia day care services and homecare services such as home nursing, home medical, and home therapy services are coordinated by AIC referral team. Family physicians can apply for such services either via hardcopy or online.**

**Keywords: Ageing population, People with dementia, stage of dementia, hospital-based care services, community centre-based services, Nursing home services, senior care centres, COMIT**

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**AGEING POPULATION & DEMENTIA**

Singapore is one of the fastest ageing countries in Asia. By 2030, those aged over 65 years old will form an estimated 23% of our population. In line with this, the number of people suffering from dementia is expected to rise. It is estimated that about 28,000 elderly aged 60 years and above are suffering from dementia, and this is expected to increase to 80,000 (about 6.7% of the population above 60 years) by 2030.

**NEED FOR COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Dementia is a progressive brain dysfunction which results in a decline in the ability to carry out daily activities such as cooking, household chores, and personal care abilities such as bathing and dressing.

People with dementia (PWDs) also have a high chance of deteriorating rapidly if their medical condition is not diagnosed early and if the appropriate treatment is not provided in time.

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Early diagnosis and treatment to such patients minimise social disintegration and help the patients themselves, family members, and other caregivers who are responsible for looking after them.

The needs of PWD vary with each stage of dementia due to the different levels of functional impairment that define each stage of this progressive disease. The care of PWD and the help needed by their caregivers need to be reviewed with reference to each stage of disease.

**CURRENT RESOURCES FOR ELDERLY AND DEMENTIA CARE**

There are various care services on the ground provided to the elderly patients and their caregivers. These are summarised in Table 1.

**NEW RESOURCES FOR DEMENTIA CARE**

The Ministry of Health and Agency for Integrated Care are working with community service providers to pilot various programmes to address the needs on the ground:

**1. Senior Care Centres (SCC)**

Senior Care Centre is an integrated day centre to support frail elderly with multiple social and healthcare needs to age-in-place at a single setting within the community as far as possible. Core services delivered includes maintenance day care services, community rehabilitation services. Centre-based nursing services (procedural nursing care, medication administration) and dementia day care programmes may be provided according to the needs of the local population. The long term aim of the SCCs is to serve as the 'staging points' for the delivery of home care services to raise efficiency in service delivery.

**2. Integrated community mental health and dementia support networks**

At national level, we are developing regional networks of community based services to support with dementia and help them age in place in the community.

To date, one such integrated support network has been piloted in northern Singapore. CARITAS iCommunity@ North is a collaboration where Khoo Teck Puat Hospital Geriatric Medicine Department provides training and resource support to service partners in the community such as Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities, O'Joy Care Services, SWAMI Dementia Day Care Centre and Sree Narayana's Multi-Service Centre @ Woodlands.

**TABLE I. CARE SERVICES PROVIDED TO ELDERLY PATIENTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS**

	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Referral Process</b>
<b>A Hospital-Based</b>			
1	Memory Clinics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide diagnosis and intervention services for dementia.</li> <li>• Run by multidisciplinary teams (such as geriatric psychiatrists, nurse clinician, psychologist, occupational therapist, medical social worker).</li> </ul>	Available in restructured hospitals (CGH, IMH, SGH, NNI, NUHS, TTSH, KTPH)
<b>B Community Centre-Based</b>			
1	Senior Activity Centre (SAC)* <i>*Under purview of Ministry of Social and Family Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in Centre for needy and vulnerable seniors staying in one- and two-room HDB rental flats in service cluster.</li> <li>• Provide socio-recreational programmes and activities for elderly.</li> </ul>	<p>Locate the nearest SAC through the Mobile Eldercare Locator.</p> <p>See Section on Quick Search for Eldercare services for more details.</p>
2	Social Day Care Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide services in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Custodial day care.</li> <li>– social-recreational activities.</li> <li>– meals.</li> <li>– maintenance therapy programme.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Refer PWD to centre-based services via AIC's referral system.</p> <p>See Section on Quick referral steps for services.</p>
3	Day Rehabilitation Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide active rehabilitation services to people with physical functional rehabilitation needs.</li> <li>• Client must be referred by a Singapore Medical Council-registered medical practitioner who will certify that the client is suitable and can benefit from rehabilitation to improve his/her functional status.</li> </ul>	
4	Dementia Day Care Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide services in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Custodial day care, cognitive and behavioural therapy, recreational activities and maintenance therapy during the day to seniors with dementia.</li> <li>– Education, support and respite care to their caregivers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Client must be diagnosed as dementia by Singapore Medical Council-registered medical practitioner.</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Overall direction for centre-based Services : Senior Care Centres (SCCs)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>One-stop social and healthcare services for elderly clients</i></li> <li>• <i>See section on SCCs for more details</i></li> </ul>			
5	SPICE (Singapore Programme for Integrated Care for the Elderly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre-based programme that provides comprehensive care for frail elderly, many of whom are nursing home eligible.</li> <li>• Provides services such as nursing and primary care; recreational activities; rehabilitative therapy; assistance with activities of daily living and home-based care services as determined by the SPICE participant's individual care plan (ICP).</li> </ul>	<p>Refer PWD to centre-based services via AIC's referral system.</p> <p>See Section on Quick referral steps for services.</p>
<b>C Community Home-Based</b>			
1	Senior Care Associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide services such as personal hygiene, housekeeping and simple health-related care tasks.</li> </ul>	Refer PWD to home-based services via AIC's referral system.
2	Home Care	<p><b>Home Medical Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing and managing chronic illness.</li> <li>• Prescription of medication.</li> </ul> <p><b>Home Nursing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up of chronic illness.</li> <li>• Procedures – change of feeding tube/ urinary catheter. Injection, wound care, stoma care.</li> <li>• Health education/ monitor BP / Blood glucose.</li> <li>• Teaching simple exercises.</li> <li>• Caregiver training.</li> <li>• Others e.g. packing of medication.</li> </ul> <p><b>Home Therapy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physiotherapy.</li> <li>• Training for Activities of Daily Living (ADL) / Instrumental ADL.</li> <li>• Home environmental assessment &amp; Home equipment training.</li> </ul>	See Section on Quick referral steps for services.
3	Dementia Eldersitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage the PWDs in meaningful and structured activities to maintain their cognitive function, and providing respite to caregivers.</li> <li>• Client must be diagnosed as dementia by Singapore Medical Council-registered medical practitioner.</li> </ul>	<p>Currently provided by the Alzheimer's' Disease Association (ADA).</p> <p>Referral Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please download the referral form from ADA website: <a href="http://www.alz.org.sg/support-services/caregiver-support-service">http://www.alz.org.sg/support-services/caregiver-support-service</a></li> <li>• Fax the completed form to 65936 444</li> <li>• For any queries, please call ADA Dementia Helpline 63770 700</li> </ul>
4	Home Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide intervention to PWDs exhibiting behavioural issues which include environmental modification, dementia management skills and psycho-education support to caregivers.</li> <li>• Client must be diagnosed as dementia by Singapore Medical Council-registered medical practitioner.</li> </ul>	

**D Nursing Home**

1 Nursing Home	Provide residential nursing care for seniors who are not able to be cared for at home. Service include included regular maintenance therapy services, as well as socio-recreational activities, are organised for the seniors.	Refer PWD to centre-based services via AIC's referral system.  See Section on Quick referral steps for services.
2 Nursing Home with Dementia Beds	Nursing home with dementia-friendly facilities to PWDs.	

**3. COMIT (Community Intervention Teams)**

COMIT supports GPs in managing elderly with dementia in the community by providing allied health professionals services and counselling services for the seniors and their caregivers:

- Care coordination for various services required (e.g. DDCC, Home Help Services etc)
- Caregiver education and understanding of the condition for better communications and management of elderly
- Where Allied Health Professional services are available, home visits for environmental assessment to reduce risks of falls; psychosocial therapies of caregivers

As COMIT programmes is still in pilot phase, the details for GP referrals are being worked out and AIC will share the referral workflow when the programmes are more established.

**QUICK SEARCH FOR ELDERCARE SERVICES**

The Mobile Eldercare Locator (MEL) is a mobile application developed by the Singapore Silver Pages (SSP) team, it enables users to search for health and social care services in Singapore, based on specified eldercare needs of the individuals or their loved ones.

Users can find out more about the services offered by the service providers and are able to locate the service providers easily with the directional maps and instructions provided.

**TABLE 3. QUICK REFERRAL STEPS FOR SERVICES**

Online	Hard Copy
<p><b>Referral via Integrated Referral Management System (IRMS)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Apply system account to become the system user</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Login to AIC website: <a href="http://www.aic.sg">http://www.aic.sg</a></li> <li>- Click on the icon (bottom left) of "Login to e-referral System" On IRMS website <a href="https://app.aic.sg/eReg/(S(bcwgvyba5snu3b5k122acrpr))/Login.aspx">https://app.aic.sg/eReg/(S(bcwgvyba5snu3b5k122acrpr))/Login.aspx</a> click on the icon of "Register as new user". Complete the necessary fields &amp; submit the e-form</li> <li>- For enquiry pertaining to application for account, contact 6603 6995 from Monday to Friday (8.30am until 5.30pm) or email to <a href="mailto:enquiries@aic.sg">enquiries@aic.sg</a></li> <li>- An account typically takes about 3 workings days for approval</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Guidance on System Navigation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Once you are successfully registered as user, you are allowed to put up E-referral via IRMS</li> <li>- If you require training in using the system, please contact 66036995 from Monday to Friday (8.30am until 5.30pm) or email to <a href="mailto:enquiries@aic.sg">enquiries@aic.sg</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Referral via hardcopy referral form (only applicable to General Practitioner)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Download &amp; print our AIC Referral Form from AIC Website: <a href="http://www.aic.sg/page.aspx?id=57">http://www.aic.sg/page.aspx?id=57</a></li> <li>- Click on "Care Referral Forms" or "Care Referrals"</li> <li>- On AIC website (<a href="http://www.aic.sg/page.aspx?id=149">http://www.aic.sg/page.aspx?id=149</a>), scroll down &amp; click on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>"Day Rehabilitation/ Dementia Daycare Services Referral Form"</b> - for Day Rehabilitation or Dementia Daycare Services</li> <li>- <b>"Home Care Services Application Forms"</b> - for Home Nursing, Home Medical and Home Therapy Services</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Please fax the completed referral forms to 6820 0732</li> <li>- For enquiry regarding to referral, please contact 6603 6932 from Monday to Friday(8.30am until 6pm)</li> </ul>

**I. Search Functions**

**TABLE 2. SEARCH FUNCTIONS**

a. Search by Services	A non-location specified search which allows users to look for health and/or social care service providers
b. Search by Region	A location specified search which allows users to look for service providers based on an identified region or zone(s).
c. Search by My Current Location	A search which allows users to look for service providers located around their current location, or by providing a postal code or address.
d. Search by Service Provider	A basic search which allows users to browse through a list of service providers, arranged in alphabetical order.

**2. Steps to download**

- Go to [http://www.aic.sg/silverpages/mobile\\_eldercare\\_locator\\_mel/](http://www.aic.sg/silverpages/mobile_eldercare_locator_mel/)
- Download the mobile application which is compatible with:
  - iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad running on iOS 4.3 or later.
  - Android devices running on Android version 2.1 and above.

**QUICK REFERRAL STEPS FOR SERVICES**

Referral to community centre-based services such as day rehabilitation and dementia day care services, and homecare services such as home nursing, home medical and home therapy services are coordinated by AIC referral team. Primary care physicians can apply for their patients for the above services either via hardcopy or online. They may also contact the AIC referral team at 6603 6932 for any enquiries.

In view of the complexity of nursing home referral (requires detailed information included medical, nursing, mobility & functional status, social background, financial assessment etc.), it is advisable that patient approach the medical social worker of the institution that have regular follow ups to advise them on long term care arrangement. For enquiry regarding to referral, please contact 6603 6932 from Monday to Friday (8.30am until 6pm).

### HELPLINE

For general enquiries e.g. assistance schemes, programmes, you may wish to contact AIC hotline at 6603 6800 or enquiries@aic.sg

### WHY SHOULD YOU BE PART OF THE MENTAL HEALTH GP PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (GPPP)?

The mental health GPPP aims at collaborative care between mental health professionals and GPs in managing patients with depression, anxiety and eventually dementia and psychosis as well. The goal would be for the GP network to be a viable

option and source for patients to seek treatment for their mental health issues. MOH, AIC and the RHs can provide the support necessary for this collaborative care in the form of:

### Training for GPs in mental health care

- Family Physician Skills Course;
- Training and support on cases from RHs;
- GDMH.

### Linkages and coordination with RHs and AIC

- It is important to know that GPs can choose the RHs they wish to partner and the type of MH patients they wish to manage;
- RHs and AIC would provide liaison services to help coordinate patients to and from GPs to expedite and facilitate the management of appointments, meetings and the sharing of information.

To be a part of the Community Mental Health GP Partnership Programme or to find out more about the programme, please email enquiries@aic.sg

### LEARNING POINTS

- **People with dementia (PWD) need community resources to minimise the resulting impact of the progressive disability.**
- **The various care services available in Singapore for elderly patients and their caregivers are: hospital based, community centre-based, community home-based, and nursing home based.**
- **New services for dementia care are: senior care centres (SCC), integrated community mental health and dementia support networks, and Community Intervention Teams (COMIT).**
- **The Mobile Eldercare Locator (MEL) enables users to search for health and social care services in Singapore based on specified eldercare needs of the individuals.**
- **Referral to community centre-based services such as day rehabilitation and dementia day care services and homecare services such as home nursing, home medical, and home therapy services are co-ordinated by AIC referral team.**
- **Family physicians can apply for such services either via hardcopy or online.**